

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH157
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Ratoath Childcare Limited
-------------------------	---------------------------

Address of Service:	Jamestown, Ratoath, Co. Meath
----------------------------	-------------------------------

Eircode:	A85 CX82
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Ellen Holian
-------------------------------------	--------------

Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
----------------------	---------------------

Date of Inspection:	19/05/2026
----------------------------	------------

Date 2 of Inspection:	20/05/2026
------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	71	PM	46
Day 2	AM	75	PM	54

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Ratoath Childcare Limited is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional pre-school care and education to children aged 0 - 6 years during the hours of operation, 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday. The service is located on the outskirts of Ratoath village in Co Meath and is conducted from 2 buildings, Building A and Building B. There were 5 care rooms in operation in Building A, namely the Waddler room, the Toddler room, Playschool room 1, and the Playschool room 2, all of which are located on the ground floor with the Preschool room located on the first floor. In Building B there are 4 care rooms, 2 of which are used for the provision of sessional pre-school care namely ECCE room 1 & ECCE room 2, school aged care rooms are also facilitated in this building. A range of outdoor play areas were available to the children attending the service in both buildings.

Staffing

The service employs 33 staff members to include the registered provider and company director, a service manager and assistant manager who are employed to coordinate the day-to-day operational management of the service. Three staff members are employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with children with additional needs, posts which are funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. Three staff members work with the school aged children only and 4 chefs are employed in the service. Three students were participating in work experience placement, one of which was present in the service on the second day of inspection. The registered provider was present in the service on both days of inspection.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 25 and 28; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(c) A management structure is in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a staff display board and through discussion with the staff team.

Following a review of the records compiled by the inspectors on the last inspection on 16/04/2025, it was confirmed that there were 5 staff files for review. Garda vetting disclosures for all staff members were reviewed.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

These files were reviewed on the day of this inspection,

(2)(a) Seven validated written references were available from a previous employer.

(b) Three validated written references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 5 adults whose full files were reviewed and for all other staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all employed staff.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 1 adult who had lived outside the State as an adult for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Four staff members whose files were reviewed worked directly with the pre-school children in the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) On the days of inspection there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 09:00am on the morning of inspection and remained so throughout the inspection.

19.05.2026:

- In the Waddler room there were 9 children aged 1 year 5 months to 2 years being cared for by 3 staff members.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- In the Toddler room there were 9 children aged 2 years 5 months to 3 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Playschool room 1 there were 11 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 1 month being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Playschool room 2 there were 7 children aged 3 years 4 months to 4 years 1 month being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the preschool room, there were 16 children aged 4 years 2 months to 5 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme
- In the ECCE room 1 there were 10 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 3 months being cared for by 2 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the ECCE room 2 there were 9 children aged 4 years 5 months to 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

20.05.26

- In the Waddler room there were 9 children aged 1 year 5 months to 2 years being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Toddler room there were 10 children aged 2 years 5 months to 3 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Playschool room 1 there were 11 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 1 month being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Playschool room 2 there were 9 children aged 3 years 4 months to 4 years 1 month being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the preschool room, there were 16 children aged 4 years 2 months to 5 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme
- In the ECCE room 1 there were 10 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 3 months being cared for by 2 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the ECCE room 2 there were 9 children aged 4 years 5 months to 5 years being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The service manager and assistant manager both provided relief and support in the care rooms when needed during the inspection including for nappy changing and for break cover.

(8)(a) Based on a review of the service staff roster and staff sign in records it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service

Compliance Information

(1)(i) Details of 15 medication records were reviewed. These records included signed parental consent, evidence showing that two staff members had checked and countersigned each dose of medication administered and also that signatures had been obtained from the children's parent or guardian when collecting the child to document that they were aware if medication was administered to their child over the course of the day and at what time.

(k) The service had a record in writing of the details of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children. Eleven records were sampled and found to be clear and legible and included parental signatures to confirm that had been informed and were aware of the incident involving their child on the day of occurrence.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- Throughout the service the early years practitioners were observed working collaboratively which created a caring and supportive atmosphere in the service. This was evidenced in the practitioners engaging in regular interactions in planning to support the children's needs regarding food, drinks, sleep and nappy changing and when coordinating the daily routine and when preparing for and implementing activities.
- Mealtimes were observed to be a social occasion with early years practitioners observed chatting to the children when having their meals which created a relaxed atmosphere and promoted social interaction between the children and the adults. The children were given plenty of time to eat and were not rushed. The children's independence was encouraged and children who were able were allowed to and praised for feeding themselves, with assistance provided by staff members when necessary. The practitioners in the Waddler room sat in front of the children when they were eating providing assistance as needed whilst promoting the children's independence with eating. Water was available on low level tables throughout the service enabling the children to take a drink as needed throughout the day.
- The practitioners informed the inspector that the sleep needs of the children in the Waddler Room were generally met in line with their home routine but that these children would be facilitated to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness outside of their normal routine, if required. During the inspection these children did not show signs of tiredness or require sleep until after dinner. The children attending the Toddler room had a scheduled period of rest after they had their dinner.
- Children wore protective bibs at mealtimes and during messy play activities including water play and painting to protect their clothes. The children were supported in putting on their coats and outdoor wear prior to spending time outside.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Throughout the care rooms the early years practitioners verbally informed the children of upcoming activities, movement and changes in routine as well as songs and rhymes being used to support smooth transitions.
- The service promotes outdoor play, and this was demonstrated on both days of inspection by all of the children in attendance having access to the outdoor play areas in the service.

Supporting relationships:

- The atmosphere in the service was warm, and child centred as evidenced in the sensitivity and kindness shown by the early year's practitioners to the children through nurturing interactions in a relaxed partnership style. The practitioners were observed listening attentively and giving each child plenty of time to express their thoughts and questions and responding to children's social bids by engaging in individual conversations, joint laughter and shows of affection.
- The inspectors observed the children in all rooms to be engaged in activities that were planned based on the children's interests or which the children had chosen themselves. Practitioners paid close attention to children's emerging interests and kept note of this information to incorporate when planning the weekly curriculum of activities. The practitioners in each room were observed to build the children's confidence by praising and encouraging their involvement in activities and on completion of tasks.
- There was a consistency in staff provision in the service, and the children were observed to be very familiar with the practitioners caring for them and sought them out with ease as needed. In turn the early years practitioners were frequently heard making reference to the children's siblings, parents, pets and family members by name which nurtured links with family and home.
- The early years practitioners communicated with parents and guardians daily, both informally during drop off and collection, in the rooms attended by the younger children a record of the children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and if relevant nappy changes and sleep were maintained and shared with parents when the children were being collected from the service.

Physical and material environment:

- Throughout the care rooms the learning materials and play resources were accessible to the children on low level shelving for them to take and return as they chose, this encouraged the children's independence and choice.
- The Waddler and Toddler room accommodated the youngest children in attendance in the service, toys and play materials suitable for the age and stage of the children accommodated in each room were

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

provided to support the development of the children's fine motor skills with standard jigsaws, pegged wooden jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, interlocking plastic toys, shape sorters, small world figurines and animals, stacking toys along with a large ball pit and climbing wedges in the Waddler room to encourage and support the children's physical play.

- Throughout the service the rooms were set up with clearly defined interest areas and an extensive range of developmentally appropriate play materials to support the children in their learning experience. The learning environments had been carefully considered by the early years practitioners to ensure they were visually stimulating and inviting for the children. Interest areas included home areas to include play kitchens, with a broad range of accessorial equipment including open ended materials such as empty food packaging all of which enabled the children to extend their play. Dolls along with doll care items, prams, buggies and dress up materials were available for the children to use. Construction materials including a variety of construction blocks and in some of the care rooms hard hats and constructions bibs were provided along with a wide range of small world materials, transport toys and jigsaws.
- An adult armchair was provided in the Waddler Room to allow practitioners to sit with and comfort the children whilst they were being cuddled.
- A wide selection of reading materials and books were available throughout the care rooms, and the children were observed to enjoy having stories read to them along with singing all of which promoted the children's language development.
- Sensory play was promoted across all the care rooms in the service with trays of water available in the care room along with a variety of dried sensory materials. Sand trays were accessible in the outdoor play area and containers of soil with a range of digging implements were provided.
- The children's creativity was supported throughout the service with art easels and a range of paint and brushes available for the children to use. The children's artwork was widely displayed in the care rooms, as were representations of the children's families including photographs of the children in addition to photographs on the birthday walls.
- The children's interest in nature was observed to be supported in the service. Based on a storybook about caterpillars the children expressed an interest in observing the life cycle of a butterfly and caterpillars were acquired in the service to facilitate this. The children in ECCE room 1 cared for the caterpillars who they released as butterflies and invited the children from all of the care rooms to observe the butterflies release. The life cycle was catalogued and captured in photographs which were proudly displayed outside

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

the classroom door. Furthermore, the children from ECCE room 1 had acquired frog spawn which was presently tadpoles and were excited at the prospect of frogs emerging.

- There were 2 enclosed outdoor areas provided for the children attending Building A. The children attending the Waddler room, Toddler room 1 and Toddler room 2 were facilitated to play in the outdoor space located off the main corridor. This area was covered with an artificial grass surface, and a range of play resources were available including a well-resourced outdoor kitchen, a low-level plastic climbing frame, low level slides, a tray-top activity table, self-propel cars, balance bikes, wheelbarrows, cones, tyres and seating for children. The outdoor area located to the rear of the building was used by the children attending the remaining pre-school rooms in Building A. Play equipment provided on the impact-absorbent surfacing in this section included a large wooden climbing frame with standing platforms and slides attached, a smaller wooden climbing frame, two swings, fixed-spring sit-on rockers and covered bench-style seating. Additionally, a spacious section of this outdoor play area was covered in concrete which enabled the children to cycle the ride on toys provided. The outdoor area to the side of Building B was predominantly covered in grass, a large wooden climbing frame and a slide were available for the children to enjoy gross motor play. A planting area where a variety of fruits and vegetables were being grown by the children alongside a bee hotel in addition to an outdoor kitchen with a sink, a cooker and a range of crockery and play materials for the children to extend their play was available in addition to a large container with soil and a sand table for the children to use. A play house was provided along with 2 circular areas where small tree stumps had been used to create seats for the children to sit on. The children had created a water wall along the perimeter of the service fence and on the day of inspection decided to use one of the trays available to create their own water game which was readily facilitated by the practitioners present.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance doors and garden gates were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available at all wash hand basins in the service.
- The premises' play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. Documented up-to date cleaning schedules were available.
- The children in the service were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded and assisted when necessary to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Staff members wore individual aprons and gloves for nappy changing procedures and washed their own hands before changing gloves between each nappy change. Children's hands were washed after they had their nappies changed.
- The service implemented effective soother management procedures, with all individually labelled soothers sterilised daily in a microwave steriliser in the Baby Room and stored in personalised containers when not in use.
- The sand tables provided in the outdoor play areas had appropriate lids or net covers available and were covered when not in use, to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.
- There was evidence that detailed care plans and medication protocols were in place for a child in attendance who had specific allergies. The early years practitioners demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the relevant safety issues associated with administration of medications to pre-school children.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern were performed and documented on all sleeping children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Adequate space of at least 50cm was left between the stackable beds in the sleep room adjacent to the kitchen which was used by the children attending the Toddler room.

Fire Safety:

- The records reviewed demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a regular basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in the FAR training records maintained for 4 staff members and their scheduled attendance in the service's staff roster.

(2)(a) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations in the care rooms and at locations throughout the service..

(b) The first aid supplies were available to the staff members at all times for the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 103 pre-school children attending the service on a Full Day Care basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28 March 2026 to 27 March 2027.